

Chapter Two-Three: To Be Ninjas

Readers' Theater Adapted from Chapters 2-3 of *NINJA COUSINS*, by the author.

PREVIEW: Scott, Liam, Lucas, and Jude were staying overnight at their grandparents' house. They were exploring in the reeds around the lake nearby when they found a gadget, partially hidden in the mud of the marsh. It was a time gadget, and before long, the boys were whirling through time and space to Medieval Japan. Once there, they were captured by warriors and taken to the Emperor's castle. The Emperor didn't know what to make of the four young boys, blond and blue-eyed at that, so different from the Japanese. When Scott mentioned that they wanted to see ninjas, the Emperor assumed they were ninjas too.

GENRE: Children's fantasy
THEME: Adventure

READERS: 10 **LENGTH:** 10 minutes
ROLES: Narrators 1–6, Scott, Liam, Lucas, Jude

TO BE NINJAS

In the castle of the Japanese emperor, 500 years ago.

NARRATOR 1: Four boys had found a time gadget near their grandparents' home. It asked them, "Where do you want to go?" and they responded "to see ninjas".

NARRATOR 2: Immediately, greenish smoke seeped out of the gadget and circled around them. The smoke got thicker and thicker, so the boys could not see beyond it. The boys began to feel they were whirling through space.

NARRATOR 3: Finally, there was a clunk, and the boys could feel solid ground beneath them. They opened their eyes and looked around. They could see a castle on the hill and a snow-covered mountain in the distance

JUDE: Where are we?

SCOTT: I think we are in Japan. That's Mt. Fuji

NARRATOR 4: Scott had made a report on Japan in school. He had made a poster with a picture of just such a mountain.

LIAM: Why would we be in Japan? *How* could we be in Japan?

SCOTT: Jude wanted to see ninjas, and Liam, you typed “to see ninjas” in the gadget. I guess that little computer is some sort of time-traveling machine.

NARRATOR 5: The other boys looked around, getting very nervous.

SCOTT: Besides traveling to Japan, we must have gone back in time too. Ninjas were real in Japan hundreds of years ago.

NARRATOR 6: Now, the boys were really scared.

JUDE/LUCAS: (crying out fearfully): I want to go home!

LIAM: I still have the gadget. I guess I can type in “home”, and it will take us back.

LUCAS (shouting): Do it! Do it now!

NARRATOR 1: Jude was not so sure.

JUDE: Wait, guys, let’s go to that castle and see if we can see some real ninjas first.

NARRATOR 2: Scott, Liam, and Lucas looked at each other and grinned. Yes!

SCOTT (smiling): Good idea, little cuz!

NARRATOR 3: The boys began trudging through the forest toward the castle, but their excitement vanished when warriors surrounded them.

NARRATOR 4: The warriors were all armored up, with horned masks over their faces.

NARRATOR 5: Each boy was lifted onto the back of a horse, with a warrior on the saddle behind him. They galloped off toward the castle.

NARRATOR 6: When they reached the castle, the warriors, really Japanese samurai, took the boys to the Emperor’s throne room.

NARRATOR 1: The Emperor seemed agitated, worried.

NARRATOR 2: Though children, the boys were so different from any people they had ever seen, that the samurai, and even the Emperor, were confused and worried by their presence.

SCOTT (whispering): I think they don't know what to do with us! They aren't used to Americans. Maybe they think we are children of their gods, or something!

NARRATOR 3: Now, that was a thought! Liam, Lucas, and Jude liked that idea. Scott stood tall. He would play the part.

SCOTT (forcefully): Emperor, samurai, we are from the land of America. We have come to see ninjas.

NARRATOR 4: Scott knew the emperor and samurai wouldn't understand English any better than he understood Japanese, but he hoped if he acted strong and confident, they would be impressed.

NARRATOR 5: At the mention of ninjas, the emperor and samurai looked at each other. Was this person a special ninja?

NARRATOR 6: Suddenly, the samurai began talking and moving around. The Emperor ordered them to go, and off they went.

NARRATOR 1: Then the emperor turned to the young ninjas and bowed respectfully. Scott, Liam, Lucas, and Jude bowed back quietly, aware that their status had changed.

NARRATOR 2: Within a few minutes, a small man entered the room and walked boldly toward the emperor and the boys, whose eyes widened as they realized that this was a real ninja.

NARRATOR 3: He was dressed all in black, with gloves, and a soft, black mask covered part of his face. He approached the emperor and bowed solemnly. Then he turned toward the boys and bowed to them too.

NARRATOR 4: Scott and Liam, the oldest of the boys, realized they needed to pretend they were ninjas. They bowed in response.

NARRATOR 5: The younger boys followed their cue.

SCOTT: We have come to see ninjas. You, sir, seem to be a ninja. We would like to see your ninja stars and other weapons and tools.

NARRATOR 6: Liam, Lucas, and Jude smiled excitedly. Of course, most of what they knew about ninjas was from the cartoon ninja DVDs they saw at home.

NARRATOR 1: The ninja jabbered away and gestured to the boys to follow him. They all bowed again to the emperor, and the ninja led them out through the door and down the hall.

NARRATOR 2: Eventually, they came to a room where more ninjas were milling around. Some were talking, some were practicing with their ninja stars and nets, and some were resting on mats on the floor, sipping tea. All stopped when their ninja leader entered with these four small foreigners.

NARRATOR 3: Whatever the leading ninja said, it seemed to excite the other ninjas. They all stood up and bowed to the boys. They actually seemed nervous.

SCOTT (whispering): *Whoa! They are afraid of us!*

NARRATOR 4: Scott smiled at his brothers and cousin, and then turned to face the leading ninja. He gestured for the ninjas to return to their practice. Amazingly, they seemed to understand. Soon the boys were watching the ninjas show off their skills to them.

LUCAS: Wow! We wanted to see ninjas and here they are!

NARRATOR 5: Knowing they would not be understood empowered the boys to talk to each other

JUDE: This is so cool! Look at those ninja stars.

LIAM: Yeah, let's watch carefully, so we can learn how to throw them.

SCOTT (seriously): We better. It'll blow our cover if they expect us to throw the stars, and we don't know how.

NARRATOR 6: So, Scott, Liam, Lucas, and Jude watched carefully as one ninja after another showed off his skills: throwing ninja stars and knives, using nets, and jumping and tumbling around. They almost looked like dancers, they moved so gracefully and quietly. Each boy studied what they saw, imagining himself moving as a ninja.

NARRATOR 1: Later, the Ninja showed the boys to their room. There were four beds, one table, a zen garden, and a wardrobe. Inside the wardrobe were four ninja outfits.

NARRATOR 2: The Ninja bowed and left the room.

LIAM (grinning): Can you believe it? They think we are ninjas!

LUCAS: And those ninja stars! I hope we get to throw them. Do you think they'll let us?

SCOTT (solemnly): I bet they will expect us to show them *our* ninja skills! I hope you watched carefully

NARRATOR 3: This quieted the boys down, as they realized they would probably not be able to impress them. After all, they had never, ever, even held a real ninja star. Liam and Lucas had been ninjas for Halloween last year, but they hadn't had stars to throw.

JUDE (worried): What will happen if they can tell we don't know how?

SCOTT: I don't know. Maybe we should use that travel gadget to go home before we find out.

LUCAS: Liam, I hope you still have it.

NARRATOR 4: Liam reached down into the pocket of his cargo pants. He grasped the gadget and nodded.

LIAM: Yeah, it's still here. Whatcha think? Should we go now?

NARRATOR 5: Liam pulled the travel gadget out of his pocket and looked at the others.

NARRATOR 6: Silence. They knew they might be in danger if they stayed, but they didn't really want to go either. They were eager to try on those ninja outfits in the wardrobe.

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SCOTT: Well, I guess we can go home anytime. Let's wait until it starts to get scary. I want to be a ninja, at least for a little while.

NARRATOR 1: The others nodded.

LIAM: I will keep the gadget handy, and we should stay together, so we can zoom away fast if we need to.

NARRATOR 2: Big smiles lit up their faces. They were in for an adventure